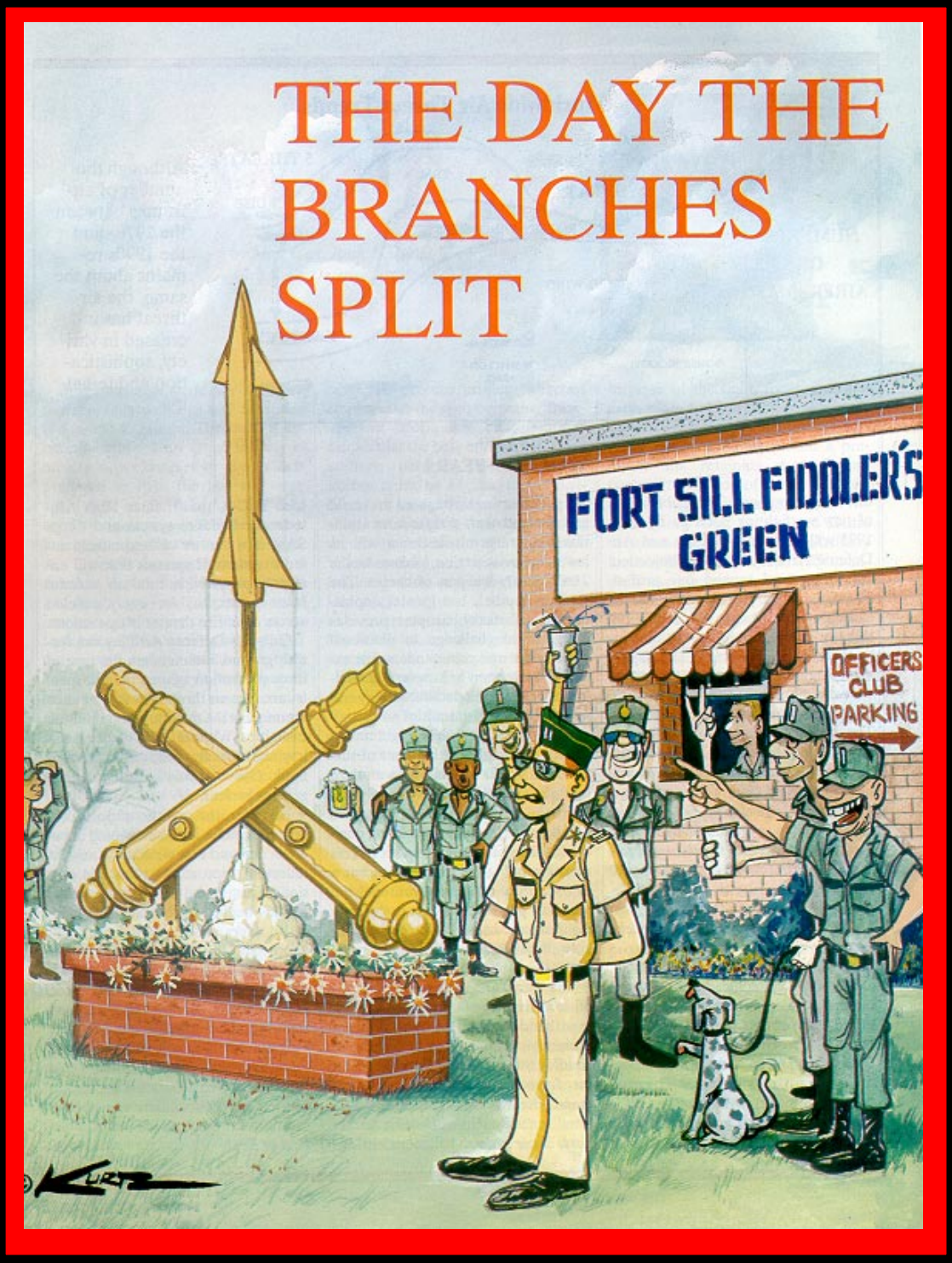

Effective 20 June 1968, Army Order No. 25 Separated Air Defense Artillery from Field Artillery

THE DAY THE BRANCHES SPLIT

Department of the Army Grants Air Defense Artillery A Long-Sought Divorce From Field Artillery

by Blair Case

> ***"It was a much talked about marriage from the very start. The two partners, it was said, had little in common. The similarity of materiel, which in the beginning had represented the greatest bond between the two arms had evolved along such diverse paths that it had become impossible to discern a fragment of commonality. So when the union was dissolved, the wonder was not so much that it had ended, but that it had lasted as long as it did—Armed Forces Journal.***

On 14 June 1968, when the Department of the Army issued General Order No. 25 separating Air Defense Artillery from Field Artillery, a parade was scheduled at the U.S. Army Artillery School, Fort Sill, Okla. The parade's purpose was to celebrate the creation of a new combat arms branch, but some soldiers who had chosen Air Defense Artillery thought the Redlegs seemed to be celebrating their departure a bit too much.

"All units at Fort Sill participated, including the battery that I commanded," recalls Col. (Ret.) Roy W Tate, who was later to become the deputy assistant commandant of the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery School, Fort Bliss, Texas. "The review was conducted with much pomp and enthusiasm. The soldiers, who had been prompted beforehand, cheered loudly when it was announced that Field Artillery was now a separate branch that no longer included Air Defense Artillery.

"Following the review, officers were invited to a special ceremony. A large replica of the Artillery insignia had been erected near the Officer's Club. After the officers had gathered around, the missile was launched from the insignia and went rocketing away. All the officers (except me) took off their insignia, replaced them with those without missiles and retired to the Fiddler's Green for refreshments and loud celebration.

"Afterward," Tate continued, "some of the officers noticed that I continued to wear what was now Air Defense Artillery brass, and there was considerable controversy as to whether or not I remained fit for command. Fortunately, this was resolved in my favor, but I felt more comfortable when I was reassigned to Fort Bliss a few months later."

The parade marked the end of a rocky 22-year marriage between Coast Artillery (which included Antiaircraft Artillery as well as Seacoast Artillery) and Field Artillery. "It was a much talked about marriage from the very start," noted the *Armed Forces Journal*. "The two partners, it was said, had little in common. The similarity of materiel, which in the beginning had represented the greatest bond between the two arms, had evolved along such diverse paths that it had become impossible to discern a fragment of commonality. So when the union was dissolved, the wonder was not so much that it had ended but that it had lasted as long as it did."

The Army announced its decision to merge the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, the Seacoast Artillery School at Fort Scott, Calif., and the Antiaircraft Artillery School at Fort Bliss, Texas, in the fall of 1946. The decision grew out of a March 1946 conference at Fort Sill. Representatives from the War Department; General Staff; Army Air Force; Navy; Marine Corps; Headquarters, Army Ground Forces; and all Army Ground Forces components attended the conference. Their most controversial proposal was to consolidate Coast Artillery and Field Artillery into one branch.

The Army had originally split Artillery into Coast Artillery and Field Artillery in 1907 because Field Artillery could follow other combat arms into the field while Coast Artillery was anchored to its seacoast fortifications. However, this argument no longer held true in 1946. Coast Artillery, its seacoast defense mission usurped by air power, was headed toward oblivion, but its antiaircraft arm, in response to the ascendancy of air power, had evolved, gradually at first and then with increasing urgency as the United States entered World War II, into a highly mobile force.

Antiaircraft units, many of them equipped with self-propelled guns, followed American infantry and armor across Europe; dispersing, as required, to cover scattered headquarters and swiftly advancing spearheads; and converging, when necessary, to provide massed antiaircraft fire at decisive points of attack. The "Triple A" units frequently augmented Field Artillery by delivering direct fire against enemy counterattacks and fortified defensive positions.

With the post-war demobilization underway, the 1946 conferees judged that combining Coast Artillery with Field Artillery would conserve scarce manpower, provide more flexibility in officer assignments and improve morale and promotion potential, but intraservice rivalries also played a decisive role. Army representatives who attended the conference saw consolidation as a way of rescuing Antiaircraft Artillery from the clutches of the Army Air Force.

Tube artillery required officers experienced in the employment of howitzers and cannons, while air defense artillery required officers skilled in the highly technical and demanding environment of missile science.

Army Air Force Commander Gen. Henry “Hap” Arnold had first advocated turning Antiaircraft Artillery over to the Army Air Force in 1943. During the North African Campaign, inexperienced U.S. antiaircraft crews shot up a number of friendly planes, and Arnold saw placing Antiaircraft Artillery under Army Air Force control as the only solution to the fratricide problem. Now the Army Air Force was about to become a separate service and wanted to take Antiaircraft Artillery with it as it left the Army.

The Army, however, was not about to cede Antiaircraft Artillery to the Air Force without a fight. During the war, ground commanders discovered there wasn’t enough antiaircraft artillery to go around when they really needed it, as during the North African Campaign when German aircraft had mercilessly bombed and strafed U.S. formations. Later in the war, when the Allied air forces had established air superiority, they learned that antiaircraft units could be easily converted to field artillery units. They envisioned the same thing happening in the next war and saw merging Coast Artillery, along with its antiaircraft artillery force, into Field Artillery as a way of saving a valuable asset.

Therefore, when Chief of Staff Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower issued a cost-cutting decree in August 1946, the Army moved to integrate the two branches. In January 1947, War Department General Order No. 11 redesignated the Field Artillery School as the Artillery School (it was later to become the Artillery and Missile School) with the Antiaircraft Artillery School and Seacoast Artillery School as adjuncts. Three years later, in 1950, Congress passed the Army Reorganization Act to consolidate Field Artillery and Coast Artillery into one branch.

The Artillery School revamped its curriculum in the fall of 1947 to include common instruction on all artillery weapons. The problem was that Antiaircraft Artillery’s automatic weapons and “ack-ack” guns had little in common with weapons employed by the Seacoast and Field Artilleries, and their successors were to have even less. The air threat was growing more sophisticated, and more sophisticated technology, surface-to-air missiles along with their complex target acquisition and guidance systems was required to counter it.

The Army closed the Seacoast Artillery School in 1950 and disbanded Seacoast Artillery units or converted them to Field or Antiaircraft Artillery that same year. Thereafter, only Field and Antiaircraft Artillery (called Air Defense Artillery after 1957) existed as part of the Army’s artillery, but it was still a case of “mixing apples and oranges.”

Because of the growing divergence of techniques, tactics, doctrine, equipment and materiel for the two artilleries, the Continental Army Command outlined a plan in 1955 to develop basic courses in Field Artillery and Antiaircraft Artillery for new officers. Integrated basic and advanced officer courses, which had been initiated in 1947, had failed to provide officers with adequate preparation to serve effectively in either artillery. With support from the Army’s assistant chief of staff for training, the Continental Army Command created basic courses for the two artilleries in 1957, but reintegrated basic officer training in 1958 through 1961 because of the lack of officers and money. In the meantime, the Continental Army Command retained the integrated artillery advanced course for officers with five to eight years of experience because of pressure to maintain flexibility in officer assignments.

Soldiers faced with the dubious challenge of mastering both air defense and tube artillery soon began to see the establishment of a separate air defense branch as a natural and logical step. Tube artillery required officers experienced in the employment of howitzers and cannons, while Air Defense Artillery required officers skilled in the highly technical and demanding environment of missile science. The consolidated officer basic course was producing, instead, officers particularly well versed in neither.

The pressure to end integrated training and form Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery as two distinct combat arms continued to mount. Based upon the report of the Army Officer Education and Review Board of 1958, the Continental Army Command reintroduced separate basic officer courses in 1962 because of the need

General Orders HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 14 JUNE 1968

No. 25

AIR DEFENSE ARTILLERY BRANCH

Effective 20 June 1968, pursuant to the authority contained in Title 10,United States Code, Section 3063(a) (13), Air Defense Artillery is established as a basic branch of the Army.

By order of the Secretary of the Army:

Harold K. Johnson
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

Official:
KENNETH G.. WICKHAM
Major General, United States Army
The Adjutant General

for specialized training for new officers. Because the Army wanted flexibility to shift experienced artillery officers easily between Field and Air Defense Artillery units, the command retained the integrated advanced course. As a part of the advanced course, student officers received instruction at both the Artillery and Guided Missile School and the Air Defense School.

Vietnam emphasized the need for separation by taxing the Artillery and Guided Missile School's ability to crank out officers for the fire bases of Southeast Asia while concurrently maintaining free world air defense artillery employment. At the direction of the Commanding General, Continental Army Command, the Artillery and Guided Missile School and the Air Defense School explored the desirability of dividing the artillery into two branches. Officer personnel policies and their effect upon artillery combat operations in Vietnam, as well as the responsiveness of the Artillery Officer Corps to meet future military requirements, were explored and evaluated.

The Army recognized that a growing division of doctrine, mission, training, equipment and techniques were evolving within the Artillery Branch as a result of the scientific advances within the military. This diversion of interest required a manpower pool with specialized characteristics. The Army concluded that two career branches could provide an improved response for the existing dual mission of the Artillery Branch and could better meet the anticipated professional requirements of future weapon systems while saving men and money.

In line with this, the authors of the Artillery Branch Study of 1966 concluded that integrated training "spawned mediocrity." The report cited "strong comments from commanders against assigning air defense officers to Field Artillery units in Vietnam since they have considerable difficulty in fulfilling Field Artillery officer responsibilities," incidents in which air defense officers assigned to Field Artillery fire direction centers were involved in friendly fire incidents and evidence that Field Artillery officers assigned to air defense units were slow to master the intricacies of air defense systems.

A major problem was that the one-year tour of duty in Vietnam left little time for on-the-job training. Field Artillery commanders in Vietnam complained that they did not have the time to train an air defense artilleryman to be competent in Field Artillery. "A Field Artillery outfit in combat can absorb only a limited number of officers who do not have a thorough knowledge of what it takes to get cannon balls on the target," said one Field Artillery commander. "The truth of this comment is amplified by the one-year tour here in Vietnam. There is little or no fat in the TOES; everyone has a job to do and there is little room for inexperienced understudies." Another Field Artillery officer complained that one air defense major he assigned as a field artillery battalion executive officer "took the attitude that he was qualified for a far more sophisticated weapon system and it was beneath him to dirty his hands with popguns, and furthermore, he did not know a thing about Field Artillery and wondered how he could be expected to learn all this new stuff in just 13 months."

But air defense commanders expressed an equally dim view of branch integration, with its requisite for cross training and cross assignments, and argued that they also needed "officers who could hit the ground running." "The assignment to this command of an officer whose training and experience are limited to Field Artillery does affect the operational efficiency of the unit to which he is assigned," observed the commander of U.S. Army Air Defense Command.

"The limited introduction to air defense materiel, tactics and techniques of operation presented to this officer during the Artillery Career Course does not provide him with sufficient knowledge or background to become an effective member of the team," another air defense unit commander stated. "Detailed knowledge of his weapons is essential for any unit commander. In the case of an air defense battery commander, the complexity and sophistication of his materiel is such that it cannot be mastered quickly and easily."

However, anyone reading the Artillery Branch Study of 1966 cannot help but be struck by the perception that its authors, judging by the preponderance of data they devoted to career issues, seem to have viewed branch integration's adverse effects on officer efficiency ratings and selections for promotion as a more compelling argument for separation than integration's impact on unit readiness. By mid-1966, it was clear to the chief of the Artillery Branch, and just about everybody else, that all was not well with artillery officers' career progressions. On all the barometers of career success, including promotion lists and selection to senior service colleges, Artillery officers showed a lack of competitiveness with their contemporaries from Infantry and Armor by placing third. Reflecting this concern, the 1966 study devoted an entire chapter to an exploration of comments on officer efficiency reports. "His present limitation is his lack of technical experience with Field Artillery," decreed one Field Artillery rater. "The exacting requirements and scope of work imposed on a U.S. Army Air Defense Command battalion," wrote an air defense commander, "requires maximum continuing effort and production by assigned personnel and does not permit time for a slow progressive assumption of responsibilities, especially by an officer of his grade [captain] and term of service."

"The Artillery Branch Study of 1966 contains some arguments for separating Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery that are based on doctrinal considerations," said Lt. Col. Thomas E. Christianson, then the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery command historian. "However, the tone of the report suggests that the desire to make Field

News that they were noncombatants would have come as a shock to the M-42 Duster and Quad .50-caliber machine gun crews who were continuously and often heroically engaged with the enemy in some of the war's most savage fighting.

Artillery and Air Defense Artillery officers more competitive with their contemporaries was paramount in the decision to separate Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery."

Labeling the years of integration as detrimental to both Field and Air Defense Artillery, the authors of the study called for forming two separate branches. Having built up a head of steam, the move toward separation gained impetus. In 1967, the Department of the Army decided to separate advanced courses for Air Defense and Field Artillery. This decision was followed by the final decision to separate the branches and, in June 1968, the separation was established by DA General Order No. 25.

The immediate problem facing the Army was to identify which officers were to be in Air Defense Artillery and which in Field Artillery. The Artillery Branch Career Management Office conducted a comprehensive survey of officers' files, in the process considering personal preference. Each of the 25,000 files and the officers they represented were individually classified as either Air Defense Artillery or Field Artillery.

Meanwhile, a separate office was established for the career management of Air Defense Artillery officers below the grade of colonel within the Officer Personnel Directorate, Office of Personnel Operations, Department of the Army. Col. Joseph C. Fimiani was selected to head the newly established office. It managed the records of 7,000 officers and warrant officers when it opened for business on Dec. 1, 1968. The Enlisted Personnel Directorate, Office of Personnel Operations, Department of the Army, continued to guide the careers of noncom missioned officers and enlisted soldiers assigned to the new branch.

Many talented and visionary officers with a grasp of, or at least an intuition for, the evolving nature of warfare immediately volunteered for the new branch. "I chose Air Defense Artillery," said Tate, "because my experience was all ADA, to include just having completed a tour in Vietnam with Hawk. Also, my father was Coast Artillery and the AAA connection had interested me in the business. Air Defense Artillery was, and is, more progressive, interesting and dynamic than Field Artillery."

Air Defense Artillery was somewhat at a disadvantage in rallying officers to its banner. The branch's main drawback was that the handwriting was already on the wall for the Army Air Defense Command (ARADCOM), headquartered at Ent Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colo. ARADCOM had led an uneasy existence since its creation in 1950, then and always under the operational control of the Air Force. Its organizational pride was high during the 1950s when Americans nervously scanned the skies for Soviet bombers, dug bomb shelters and relied on the Nike missile sites that encircled the nation's major cities to save them from nuclear' disaster. Then intercontinental ballistic missiles, which the Nikes could not counter, replaced long range bombers as the chief threat, and ARADCOM's days were numbered.

In 1974, ARADCOM was dissolved, leaving but one Nike site in all of the continental United States. At least eight colonel and six general officer slots were gone forever. Many artillerymen, careerists worried about future promotional opportunities, apparently anticipated ARADCOM's demise. When the branches were separated, they besieged the Military Personnel Center with petitions opting for Field Artillery.

Another part of the problem was that, in their efforts to promote their own branch, Field Artillery officers in positions to influence future lieutenants frequently bad mouthed Air Defense Artillery. For example, tactical officers at Fort Sill's Robinson Barracks, then home of the Artillery Officer Candidate School, told members of Field Artillery Officer Candidate School Class 1 69 they were special because they were the first class to pin on the crossed cannons instead of the crossed cannons and missile insignia that now belonged solely to Air De

fense Artillery. The implication was that the new branch was a haven for noncombatants, and that candidates who put Air Defense Artillery on their personal preference sheets for future assignments were looking for a way out of Vietnam.

Most air defense assets, it is true, remained in Germany, Korea or the United States, but Hawk batteries were deployed in Vietnam. And news that they were noncombatants would have come as a shock to the M42 Duster and Quad .50-caliber machine gun crews who were continuously and often heroically engaged with the enemy in some of the war's most savage fighting. But the stigma, however unfairly applied, plagued the new branch for nearly two decades, handicapping it in the intraservice recruiting wars until a renaissance of high-tech ADA weapons, changing threat scenarios and the "Scudbusters" of Operation Desert Storm gave the branch an altogether different image.

The first branch chief, Maj. Gen. George V Underwood, went so far as to write a personal letter to all commissioned officers in air defense assignments, prophesying a bright ADA future and pleading with them to stay where they were. This had some effect, but in the end, the assignments desks had to categorically reject bids to go Field Artillery from officers with appreciable ADA experience. Otherwise, there would not have been sufficient talent to man the new branch.

None of this dampened the enthusiasm of the soldiers who were determined to build their careers in Air Defense Artillery. "New and eager, proud and proficient, the new Air Defense Artillery Branch comes into the Army as a combat arm with more than 7,000 officers and warrant officers on its rolls," wrote Lt. Col. Federick C. Dahlquist and Maj. David G. Sanford in an article they prepared while assigned to Air Defense Artillery Branch, Office of Personnel Operations. "With a link to its Coast Artillery heritage, the new branch will continue to perform its ever-alert mission of first-line defense of the nation at home and abroad.

"Today the Air Defense Artillery Branch can look to the career development of its officers with a great deal of anticipation and enthusiasm," they added. "The branch can concentrate more objectively on a balanced career for its officers, knowing that its prime responsibilities lie in one path. that of missilery and radar electronics.

"Today's challenge is the continued employment of Nike Hercules and Hawk weapons in CONUS and in other critical defenses throughout the free world; the combat usage of the twin 40mm, self-propelled gun M42 in Vietnam and the deployment of Chaparral and Vulcan weapon systems," they continued. "Sentinel and SAM-D [Patriot] are tomorrow's challenge. The quality and quantity of effort that will be demanded by these latest weapon systems are but a continuation of the demand for high quality and outstanding leadership demanded of air defense artillerymen in the past.

"The future, then, is unlimited for the Air Defense Artillery Branch," they concluded. "Its personnel can walk tall with the knowledge that their branch will lead the way in the field of missilery for the Army, and that they are members of an elite group."

In retrospect, one wonders if the optimism of soldiers who rejoiced in the birth of Air Defense Artillery would have burned as brightly had they a fuller knowledge of the trials and tribulations that lay immediately ahead: disillusionment and abandonment in Vietnam, the "hollow" Army of the 1970s, the task of rebuilding the all-volunteer force and the challenge of reshaping and rearming Air Defense Artillery to meet the ever-evolving threat. However, events were to prove their confidence in themselves and the branch well placed.

"Throughout its history as an independent combat arms branch, Air Defense Artillery has proven highly adaptive to change, continuously reinventing and rearming itself to maintain relevancy in times of rapid changes in roles and missions," said Lt. Col. Joseph P. DeAntona, the director, Office Chief of Air Defense Artillery, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery School, in 2004. "As we near the 36th anniversary of the branch's creation, Air Defense Artillery is restructuring and rearming itself to defeat the 21st century's threat."

"During my recent visits with air defense soldiers, I've been exposed to the perception that ADA may be a dying branch," DeAntona continued. "Most of this perception is brought on by the fact that we're transforming our branch to meet the future air and missile threat. While, in the short term, we will inactivate several divisional Air and Missile Defense [AMD] units, our branch's roles and missions in the maneuver force and at the joint level are actually expanding. AMD soldiers will serve in every Unit of Action and every Unit of Employment the Army fields as it transforms to the future force."

"Similarly, AMD soldiers are finding new opportunities throughout the expanding Space and Missile Defense arena," DeAntona added. "For example, MOS 14J, ADA C4I Operator/Maintainer, is growing faster than any MOS in the Army. Similarly opportunities to become AMD Warrant Officers, 140A or 140E, are better than ever. Finally, AMD officer requirements are growing at every rank from captain through colonel.

"As you can see, ADA is actually growing and a vital part of Army Transformation," he concluded. "It will emerge from Army Transformation as a "enhanced" rather than "diminished" combat arm."